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Is the Golden Rule Work- able between Nations?

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IS THE GOLDEN RULE WORK- ABLE BETWEEN NATIONS?

I. What the Golden Rule Means between Individuals

The Golden Rule between individuals is not altogether as simple of understanding and easy of application as it is sometimes thought to be. If two people were living alone on an isolated island without other inhabitants and without outside communication, for each to do to the other as he wished, or ought to wish, that other to act toward him, for each to love his neighbor as himself, would be a task easily defined, however difficult it might be actually to perform. But the moment we emerge into the actual world, to the moral difficulty of really loving our neighbor as ourselves, there is added the intellectual difficulty of determining what such regard for the interests of others equally with our own really calls for in the complicated relations and circumstances of life. For in the actual world, just as there is no isolated individual who can define what is right in terms of himself only, so there

is no isolated pair who can settle their conduct and relations to one another without regard to the interests and welfare of other people. Each of us is a member of any number of pairs and larger groups, and in our attempts to do to another as we would that other should do to us we can never ignore or forget those many others to whom the Golden Rule demands that we should do as we would that they should do to us.

The application of the Golden Rule is not like paying a debt. If I owe you fifty dollars, that is a matter between you and me. I owe it without reference to anyone else. Even this statement has its qualifications, as in the case of the bankrupt, but broadly speaking it holds. The very universality of the Golden Rule, on the other hand, changes its character, and demands that in applying it to any one person I shall not forget those others to whom also it applies. I cannot decide what I ought to do for other people's children without considering the welfare of my own children. I cannot decide what to do for the public without remembering my family, and

vice versa. I cannot determine my duty to the poor neighbor on my left hand without remembering the equally poor family on my right hand.

And this makes it evident that the so-called Golden Rule is not in actual application a rule at all. It is a principle of wide application, and in the actual relations of life, because they are so complex, difficult to apply. It means that in determining my conduct I shall count that I am—as in fact I am whether I recognize it or not—a member of the community, and that the welfare of every other member of the community is as valuable as my own, and that I shall shape my conduct accordingly.

Negatively, it means that I shall • abstain from conducting my own affairs to my advantage regardless of the welfare of others. It forbids me to engage in a business which, however profitable to me, is harmful to the community, or to conduct a business, in itself legitimate, in a way that makes it injurious to my fellows. It forbids me to engage in any practice or habit which, though pleasur-

able to me, brings damage, unhappiness, or ruin to another.

Positively, it means not only that I shall be polite and courteous to others, because I myself like to be treated with courtesy, not only that I shall be a gentleman alike to women and to men, alike to superiors, equals, and inferiors, but that I shall plan and order my whole life in such way that it shall make the largest contribution to the welfare of the community. It demands that I shall consider who are really members of my community, how wide its extent is, and shall take into account in my plan of life all who are really fellow-members with me of a community, sharers of a common life.

It does not require that I shall assume responsibility for the welfare of the world—that is not only absurdly impossible but, if it were possible, would deprive others of a responsibility and of a joy in it which belongs to them—but it does require that I shall take my share of that responsibility.

It does not demand that I shall disregard my own welfare or happiness—

I am to love my neighbor *as myself*—but it means that I shall merge these in the pool of the common welfare and find my joy in the common joy. What king worthy of the name could find happiness in his own comfort and ease while his people were wretched and starving? We easily recognize his duty to find his happiness with, not separate from, his people. The Golden Rule—or, as James calls it, the Royal Law—bids each of us be kingly in our attitude toward all our fellows.

The wider our relationships, the broader our vision, the more complicated does the problem become. Within the walls of a home it is fairly easy to apply the rule. Happy that family in which the children under the influence of parental precept and example acquire almost unconsciously the habit of thinking as quickly of the other's comfort as of their own, and so prepare themselves for the more difficult applications of this principle in a larger world.

In a farming community, when each family has its farm and there is little conscious relation to the outside world,

ordinary conditions will call for little more than a negative application of the principle. No farmer will steal his neighbor's crop, nor allow his stock to trample it down and destroy it. But if a barn with its accumulated feed for the winter is consumed by fire, or a farmer falls ill and cannot plow his field or sow his seed, there will be opportunity and need for a positive application of the principle—for a counting of a neighbor's welfare as dear as our own and foregoing something of one's own comfort for the sake of his.

But the day is sure to come when the farmer discovers that the group of farmers is not the whole of the world, or of his community. Not far away is another farming community whose interests are in part identical, in part in competition with his own. There is a market town with which he must trade, a city to which his crop eventually goes, a land across the sea which needs his wheat or his beef, and whose need helps to fix the price he receives for it. And thus he discovers that in fact he is a citizen of the world, his relations

are international, his community not local but state-wide, nation-wide, world-wide.

And what is true of the farmer is true of us all. We are citizens of the world, and if we take into account actual relationships we must face the question whether the Golden Rule is workable between nations.

There is in fact no ground on which we can urge its application between individuals which will not also demand that we consider how it would apply between nations. The nations of the world are interrelated, more and more closely so. Their relations as nations react most powerfully on the happiness and welfare of individuals and communities. If these are valuable, it is imperative that we consider how they will be affected by applying to nations the principle which experience has shown to be most advantageous between individuals and smaller groups.

Let us consider then

II. The Application of the Golden Rule between Nations When at Peace

Manifestly, as between individuals, this will demand:

Negatively, that a nation abstain from any course of action which, however much to its advantage, will work injustice to a neighbor nation or inflict on it any damage save only such damage as, being incidental to some larger good, any nation ought to be willing to suffer for the common good. If my neighbor owns a city lot next to mine, it may deprive me of some light which I now enjoy if he builds upon it. Yet I could not ask him to leave it unoccupied that I might enjoy this unearned increment of advantage, nor would the Golden Rule demand that he should do so, since to do so would be, in excess of justice, to save me from a lesser loss at cost of a larger one inflicted on himself. So the extension of a nation's commerce in wholly legitimate ways may incidentally diminish the profits of another nation. Yet as the world is now organized such

free competition could not be forbidden, nor can it be regarded as contrary to the Golden Rule, since it is the best method which we have yet discovered of contributing to the greatest good of the greatest number.

But if this principle does not forbid free competition, it manifestly does forbid a war of aggression, the denial of the rights of small nations because they are small, the exploitation of a backward nation by a more advanced one for the benefit of the latter regardless of the welfare of the former, the invasion of a country by trades, like that in alcoholic liquors and opium, which tend to destroy its happiness and welfare.

But with a nation as with an individual the Golden Rule is far more than prohibitory and the positive applications are at least as important as the negative. If a boy in your community were suddenly left without father, mother, older brother, or sister it would be a miserably inadequate application of the Golden Rule for the neighbors to abstain from beating him, and leave him as best he could to feed and clothe and educate

himself. The Golden Rule calls for positive action.

And positively applied to nations the principle demands that we organize and conduct our national life, not with a view to profiting as much as we can at the expense of other nations, but to making our largest possible contribution to the world's welfare.

This will demand a healthy life at home. In a sense this is fundamental to everything else. Our own people are valuable. Loving one's neighbor nation as one's self does not forbid but requires that we shall consider the welfare of our own people. How can a nation that is indifferent to the welfare of its own youth, its own laboring classes, its own dependents, exert any strong and healthful influence on other nations? It will neither set an example worth following—and between nations as between individuals example is one of the most effective influences—nor possess the men and the resources with which to make a direct contribution to the welfare of other nations. The Golden Rule between nations demands that each

nation shall do its utmost to maintain at home a pure, strong, healthful life, all classes working not each for its own interests but all for the interests of all. Our liquor traffic, our organized vice, our luxury, our social injustice, our conflicts between classes, even our personal vices and selfishness, are not only defects of our own life, blots upon our own civilization; they are also violations of the Golden Rule between nations.

But we have not fulfilled the royal law when we purify and develop our own national life. The nation that lives for itself, however high its ideals or achievements for itself, lacks the essential characteristic of a Christian nation.

We must be ready to share our knowledge with other nations, and indeed make active efforts to transmit it to them. This is at bottom the motive and the justification of the missionary enterprise. We have, as an inheritance from the past and an acquirement, a religion and a morality which, however imperfectly we have embodied them in our national life, are the best of our posses-

sions. We have reason to know that they would be good for other nations. An essential element of them is the altruistic spirit—the spirit of the Golden Rule. We can but pass these on to those who need them—not in a spirit of conquest, not as something that we force upon them, but as a precious possession which we share with them, at cost to ourselves, indeed, but with a reflex benefit that outweighs all possible cost.

The principle that applies to the Christian message, the Christian principle, applies also to all our knowledge as far as it can be of use to other peoples. Because of this we establish schools in which we teach not only the Bible and theology but the physical sciences, medicine, history, political economy, and political science. For these too are inheritances and acquisitions which the nations of the world need only less than they need the Christian message itself, and which we could not withhold without infidelity to that message.

But as we carry to other nations our knowledge—and by the way learn

from them in return—it is incumbent on us also, as need arises, to give them our money. When San Francisco is shaken by an earthquake and ravaged with fire, Boston and Chicago come instantly to her rescue, as a generation ago all the cities of the land came to the rescue of Chicago and Boston. But national frontiers are no longer impassable boundaries to our applications of the Golden Rule. An earthquake in Sicily, a terrible disaster in Halifax, a famine in China call forth instant and generous help. And few acts of a nation are more effective in creating international friendship than these speedy responses to the cry of human need. In a private letter received from Nova Scotia soon after the Halifax explosion occur the following sentences:

I tell you, we shall never be able to say enough about the wonderful help the States have sent—the response was so spontaneous and everything done even before it was asked for. It brought tears to all our eyes when they came and told us a little of what had been done by the United States on Friday night. You know we have always been a trifle contemptuous of the United States since the war on account of their prolonged delay in entering the war. But

never again! They can have anything I've got, and I don't think I feel any differently from anyone else down here.

The following words from the *Montreal Star* are in the same vein:

Almost before the smoke-pall over the city of Halifax had blown away, the generous heart of the people of the United States had found practical answer to that black signal of distress. Before the people of the stricken city had themselves realized the magnitude of the catastrophe, relief train after relief train was tearing northward loaded with everything that intelligent sympathy could suggest for the relief of suffering and manned by skilful, warm-hearted men and women, eager as they were able, whose desire was to be of service. Behind them Congress, representing the whole United States, pledged a munificent sum to aid the sufferers. The explosion at Halifax was a national catastrophe felt throughout Canada. The thanks of all Canada, therefore, go out to those who, in this hour of trial, were so quick and so magnificently generous in their aid. "He gives twice who gives quickly," is an old saying, true as ever today. Canada will not soon forget that in time of great loss and great grief American sympathy, American skill, and American money were given, not only twice, but tenfold.

But the Golden Rule calls for more than example, impartation of knowledge,

and gifts of money. It demands a friendly interest in the welfare of other nations—a recognition of their individuality and their rights which will in general allow them to develop their own national life without constraint from us, along the lines of their own national genius and ability. This is one of the most precious possessions alike of individual and of nation. The orphan boy needs care and friendship, but he has the right to live his own life if he lives it with due regard to the rights of others. No parent even has the right to constrain his boy with a genius for art to become a merchant or a manufacturer, nor the natural farmer to become a lawyer. But if a parent may not do this with his son, how shall one nation do it for another? Bigness, force, confers no right of international control. Every nation has its own contribution to make to the world's welfare, and size is no measure of the value of that contribution. Has Greece given less to the world than Russia, Palestine than China? In his last days President William R. Harper said, "I have never doubted that

God had given me a work to do in the world which, if I did not do it, would go undone." How much more true it is of nations! The nation that lays violent hands on the life and genius of another nation, that because of its superior brute force or larger armies says to that other nation, "You shall not live your own life, but shall accept my ideals and subordinate your genius to mine," is making unpardonable egotism the excuse for national murder and international robbery. The world's highest interests are served, not by the enforced standardizing of national life, but by freedom of development and mutual recognition of the right of every nation to develop according to its own genius and ability.

But the recognition of this right leads naturally to recognizing its correlative duty. For there may arise, there have arisen, extreme cases of the violation of this principle on the part of a strong nation against a weak, calling for intervention on the part of other nations in the interest of the weak. For the Golden Rule is not, as I have said, wholly a negative thing. It sometimes

demands interference in defense of the oppressed. Some years ago a group of university professors returning home from an evening engagement heard shouts of pain and distress issuing from a cottage that they were passing. Hesitating but a moment as to their duty, they entered the house and found that in a quarrel between a father and son, one or both of them intoxicated, one had stabbed the other dangerously. A part of them remained to prevent further injuries, while the rest sought physician and police. Ordinarily a man's house is his castle, which no one may enter unbidden, but there are limitations to the rule—the intervention of a superior principle. Ordinarily if two neighbors quarrel the rest do well to keep hands off. But there are times when intervention is demanded by the rule of love. So it is with nations. There come times when one nation must protest against injustice done or threatened against another, and must if need be sustain its protest with its own army and navy. I do not enter into the discussion whether the manner of our doing

it was wholly justified, but I believe that our intervention in the affairs of Cuba in 1898 was right in principle. And I do not hesitate to affirm that England was wholly justified in coming to the help of Belgium in 1914. I only regret that it was not deemed practicable for us to sustain Britain in that action in words, at least, if not by force of arms.

But this brings us to the difficult question whether, if one nation may on occasion become the friend and defender of another, it may also at times become its more or less permanent guardian, guide, and protector. Is our course in the Philippines justifiable? Has England a right to be in India and Egypt? Is our recent recognition of Japan's pre-eminent interest in China right or wrong in principle? The question is too large to be discussed adequately in these pages. I will only venture to lay down two principles.

One of these is that the right of self-government is not inalienable. Individuals may lose it by crime or by illness of body or brain. Families may

lose it by incompetence, and the neighbors or the state be obliged to step in. Cities may lose it by riot and murder. States may lose it by the incompetence by which they become dangerous to themselves and to other nations. Palestine lost it in 63 B.C., and there is more than one utterance of Jesus to show that he clearly recognized this fact and warned his nation against the folly of attempting to cure internal weakness by throwing off the external power that sufficed in some measure to compensate for that weakness. Korea lost it, and though Japan's method of assuming guardianship may be open to just criticism there is no doubt that it was necessary for some external power to do what the Koreans were no longer able to do for themselves.

The second principle is that any nation that assumes the office of guardian to another is bound to do it in the spirit of the Golden Rule, not for exploitation and self-aggrandizement, but for the good of the other nation and of other nations at least as much as for its own. It is bound scrupulously to

regard the rights of the dependent nation and is under solemn obligation to administer its guardianship with a view to restoring the guarded nation to independence or granting it partnership as soon as a process of education can make it fit for such a position.

I believe that in the main we have followed these principles in Cuba and in the Philippines. If by our recognition of Japan's responsibility in the Orient we shall have acquired the right to exercise a friendly watchfulness over her trusteeship, and if at the same time we shall be so scrupulously just and friendly to Japan as to retain her confidence and friendship, it may well prove that we have done for the Orient the best service that at this time it is possible to render. But it is manifest that the whole situation demands of us a measure of generosity, justice, and righteousness to which not many nations of the past have risen and which we have not ourselves always attained.

III. The Application of the Golden Rule between Nations in Time of War

But is it possible to apply the Golden Rule in time of war, and in particular to nations with whom we are at war? Is not the very fact of war itself a denial or suspension of the Golden Rule? Of course the party responsible for a war of aggression violates the Golden Rule. But is it possible for the defender nation to take up arms, and taking up arms to seek to conquer its aggressor, and yet to carry on war in conformity with the Golden Rule? The answer will depend largely on how one interprets the Golden Rule, and in particular on whether one takes into account all the interests involved, or only those of the single nation with which one is at war. It may indeed be contended that in the long run it is for the interest of an attacking nation that its scheme of conquest fail. Just as it is a good thing for a young bully to find his match and get a good trouncing, so it is a good thing for a bullying nation to be defeated. In particular we may contend that it is really in the interest

of the German people that the German armies shall be defeated, and the people themselves released from the domination of those false ideals which have been industriously bred into them for forty years and more. All this is true and pertinent. It is true also that no nation can when attacked forget the interests of her own people and her own posterity. The Golden Rule does not require us to consider the interests of another nation to the exclusion of our own—to love our neighbor and not ourselves. It demands that we shall take account of her interests equally with our own—itself a very large demand, which sets a standard rarely attained.

But we shall never get an adequate view of the situation with which the world is now dealing so long as we think simply in terms of two nations. It would be folly and hypocrisy to contend that simply as between ourselves and Germany, and in itself considered, it would be a neighborly act for us to slay her sons, and, if we could reach them, to destroy her cities. Nor can any defense of such acts on the ground of retaliation

bring them under the Golden Rule. To see the situation in its true light, we must look at it as being, what in fact it is, a world-problem. In itself considered, it is not a neighborly act to kill the robber who attacks me and my family. But I can never look at it as a matter simply between myself and the robber. I must remember my family and the community also. So in this war it was not a question between Germany and England in 1914. England had to remember Belgium and France. In April, 1917, it was not a question between ourselves and Germany—important as were the issues involved simply from that point of view. Had it been a matter between ourselves and Germany only perhaps the Golden Rule would have demanded a still further endurance of wrong before we laid down the pen to take up the sword. It is better to suffer much and long before proceeding to the extremity of repaying insult with shells, and injury with cannon shots.

But it was not our own situation alone or even chiefly that confronted

us and demanded action. It was the world's situation. It was not a matter of retaliation for the murder of the Lusitania's victims, or the interference with our commerce. It was international law, which, slowly accumulated by centuries of effort, is the only basis of civilized relationships of nations; it was civilization itself that was in danger—imminent and real danger. For the sake of France, to whom we as a nation owed so much; for the sake of England, whose army and navy far more than anything we had done had thus far kept us out of war; for the sake of Europe and Asia and Africa; for the sake of the unborn generations of Americans, and for all those who might in the future, as they had in the past, find in this country a refuge from tyranny—it was for all these and in obedience to the Golden Rule itself that we went to war. So clear was the issue, so critical the situation, so much was at stake, that to have delayed longer would have been inexcusable cowardice, an unpardonable violation of the Golden Rule, a selling of our own souls for gold and ease.

And having taken up arms the Golden Rule demands that we lay them not down till the ends for which we have taken them up are achieved. What a magnificent example Belgium has set for us all! It has been well said that Belgium has indeed been a messianic nation, and the author of the phrase was undoubtedly thinking of the suffering Messiah when he used the word "messianic"—a nation which rather than break her plighted word or betray her allies has endured sufferings immeasurable with a heroism beyond all praise. America with her vastly greater resources, with her danger far less imminent, is now called upon to face the situation with equal courage, and equal determination never to lay down her arms till the righteous ends of the Allies are achieved, cost what it may in money and in men. We can afford to be impoverished, we can afford even to lay down our lives; we cannot afford for the future of the world to sacrifice our national soul.

But the Golden Rule demands a great deal more than a willingness to

fight when fighting is necessary. It requires what at certain points in the conflict may be more difficult than fighting. It demands that we fight without hatred and with a clear vision of what we are fighting for.

It was a recent immigrant to this country from the south of Europe who entering the army as a drafted man wrote back to his friends, "Hurrah, I am a soldier of the United States army. We shall fight the great battle for universal peace. We shall make the great federation of nations." We ought all to have a not less clear perception of what we fight for. We are in the business of making a new world—a world without hatred, a world without war, and therefore without the causes of war. We must not, while we fight, defeat the cause for which we fight, by fighting with hatred. Not even the German must we hate. His works, his principles, we abominate. But let us not forget that it was only when we saw those hateful principles which he is following revealed in their full hatefulness in this war that we knew how hateful they were.

We were all tainted with them in some measure. Only when Germany openly avowed them and embodied them in terrible action did we know how awful they were and repudiate them. Then let them not come back like the seven demons worse than the first into a heart swept and garnished with Pharisaic scrupulousness. If we would really practice the Golden Rule, and we must if we would create the new world of which we have caught the vision, we must love not our allies only but our enemies also.

And this means in turn that we shall be ready for peace when the hour comes. Not for a peace that means defeat of all for which we have fought—not for a peace that is but a respite till we are forced to fight again. From such a peace God save us! But we must not forget that it is peace that we desire, and as a nation we ought to lose no opportunity to convince our enemies that we desire, not vengeance but righteousness, not the victory of armies for victory's sake but of principles for the world's sake. Nor is this danger a

fancied one. In the reaction against the very real danger of a premature peace, there lurks another danger not less real. Both newspapers and public men have sometimes spoken as if the war was for war's sake, and we must shut our eyes and ears to all thoughts of peace. War till we have achieved our end—yes. But let us not forget that that end is peace—a peace of the right kind.

Is the Golden Rule workable between nations? With confidence I affirm it is both more needful and more workable between nations than between individuals. More needful because the harm done when nations do not follow it is upon a far vaster scale than when individuals violate it. Its disregard by individuals may have far-reaching consequences. But when nations set it at naught, the issues are certain to be far-reaching and wide-sweeping, involving not hundreds but thousands and millions in the stream of devastation. Now that the world has become so small, now that nations touch elbows as once tribes and individuals did, now that they call to each other out of their windows across

a narrow stream that electricity bridges in an instant, and jostle one another in the public highways of the world, the only salvation of the world from measureless disaster is the observance of the Golden Rule between nations. And it is more practicable between nations than between individuals because nations act—ought to act and usually do act—with more deliberation, less under the influence of sudden passion than individuals. Their relations are defined in compacts which they have solemnly bound themselves not to break, and not hastily to annul. There is time for sober second thought, time for the best thought of the nation to be brought to bear on the situation. There is no excuse for haste. But we must train ourselves to think and deliberate, and especially must train ourselves and our nation to recognize that the Golden Rule is the supreme law of nations—pre-eminently adapted to nations, its obedience indispensable to their welfare and the safety of the world. The Golden Rule is—it is the *only* rule that is—workable between nations.

Nor is the application of the Golden Rule between nations any longer the empty vision and wild dream of impracticable idealists. The Great War by making its necessity more evident has brought it within the range of men's thoughts and within the realm of practical politics as never before. Germany's explicit and cold-blooded repudiation of all altruistic considerations in international relationships on the one hand, and, on the other, the equally explicit affirmation of regard for the welfare of other nations on the part of Great Britain and the United States, and the not less significant conduct of France and Belgium, have exerted a deep and wide influence on the minds of men. Rarely in the history of the world, it is safe to affirm, have practical state papers put forth at a critical moment in national affairs been written on the high moral level of some of the recent definitions of the aims of Great Britain, or the Golden Rule as a principle of statecraft and international policy been so clearly and unequivocally set forth as in the successive addresses in which

President Wilson has defined the aims of the United States.

It is an hour in which to lift up our heads with pride in our country and hope for the world. If from this awful struggle it shall result that the nations of the world, or even a large and influential group of them, shall come to recognize that there cannot be one morality for the family and another for the family of nations, not only that nations must render justice to one another, but that only as they cherish in their hearts a spirit of kindness and desire for one another's welfare and embody it in their conduct can they themselves really prosper—if out of this war shall come the writing of the Golden Rule into the law of nations as its fundamental principle, then indeed will it have been worth all that it has cost and more.

It is for this that we as a nation ought now to stand, prepared for any cost and any sacrifice that it may be achieved. The Golden Rule is workable between nations. It will yet become the recognized law of nations.